Radio System Interoperability Committee

Meeting Notes - May 23, 2002

Chuck Beck (OEM) raised the question of "What is it that we want from an emergency radio interoperability radio system?" and suggested that we start with a clean sheet of paper. He volunteered to head up a whitepaper committee to develop a report on system expectations. The committee will be composed of communications users from the various emergency services disciplines.

Skip Thomas (OPM) observed that there are three levels of communications involved: basic "hosepullers," i.e., those who perform the services; service to service, such as fire to police; and incident command. The resources available for now are only sufficient to cover the latter type of communications need. OPM's goal is to get a system in place by 9/11 that will at least allow incident commanders to talk to each other and coordinate that various emergency services involved. Those jurisdictions which want more radios to include lower level personnel will have to pay for the radios themselves, possibly using LOCIP funds.

Gordon Shand (DPH) said that the statewide EMS radio system (CMED) uses 13 dispatch centers. If each had an ICALL/ITAC interface, EMS personnel and hospital emergency rooms could be connected to the emergency network relatively cheaply. He warned that the CMED equipment was about 25 years old, and might have to be replaced before long.

Capt. Al Fiore (Westport PD) noted that many local police departments are not on an 800 MHz radio system, and would need to install a radio in their control room to get ICALL/ITAC capability. Westport is building a mobile control station in an old bus, and would loan it out for emergencies.

Mike Stemmler (CSP) said that 68 radios have been received so far. DEP's hazmat units received 15, and the others have gone to the DPS homeland security office for the use of their urban search and rescue team. These radios can be passed out at an incident site.

Skip Thomas said that he was impressed with the fire and EMS services communications capabilities, and would like to enhance law enforcement capabilities to similar levels. The state expects to be able to provide each municipality with up to 3 radios, including microphones and chargers.

George Carbonell (DOT) reported that DOT has a low band system and would require an 800 MHz interface. He will have additional information on DOT's needs at a later meeting.

George Pohorilak (DPS) presented the results of a survey of emergency services frequencies prepared from a review of licenses. Fire services are mostly low band, with a good mutual aid system. Local law enforcement is scattered among all of the various police radio bands. Only a few are on 800 MHz. EMS also uses many different bands, but is tied together by the CMED system. State Police are on 800 MHz. The next step is to look at individual towns and see how they communicate.

Skip Thomas raised the issue of training people across the state in the proper use of ICALL/ITAC . Could we piggyback onto Chief State's Attorney Jack Bailey's annual training session for chiefs of police in September?

The next meeting was set for June 27, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. at DPS. [This was later postponed to July 9, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. at DPS.]